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Inasmuch as rice is the chief article of diet among the Karen, a few words should be said about its preparation. "Paddy," which is the grain before it has been cleaned for cooking, is brought home from the bins in which it has been stored and spread out on mats to dry in the sun. It is then pounded in mortars to rub off the outer husk. A second pounding removes the inner skin covering each grain and polishes the rice pure white. (See p. 68.) As cleaned rice does not keep as well as paddy, the natives pound out only enough to last a week or two. The kernels are washed in a basket with a sieve-like bottom and are then poured into a pot of boiling water. They are allowed to cook vigorously for ten minutes or less, until they swell and become soft enough to crush easily between the thumb and finger. The water is then poured off and the pot set back in the hot ashes to dry out any remaining water. When the rice is served, it remains whole, firm, and slightly hard. Soft boiled rice is most unpalatable to the Karen, who think it not so sustaining as the less cooked cereal. Nowadays the cooking is done in most places in earthen pots, which are bought from Burmese or Shan traders. These pots are of red unglazed clay, cost but a few annas, (one anna is equal to about two cents or an English penny), and last with care for some time.

Besides the rice used for ordinary meals there are many varieties of glutinous rice that are cooked or steamed on the plains for an early morning meal or for special feasts. The steamers are made like the Burmese pots, but with a number of small holes in the bottom. These are placed over vessels of boiling water, the steam of which rises through the openings and permeates the grain. I have been told that when a rare feast is desired, the rice is steamed over a vessel in which a chicken is boiling, and the rice becomes flavored with the fowl. Steamed glutinous rice is sometimes mixed with sessimum seeds and pounded in a mortar until it becomes a sticky paste. This mixture is called "to me to pi."

It is reported that long ago, before the Karen had as much dealing with the Burmese as they do now, they cooked their rice in joints of bamboo. At any rate, this is their present practice when out in the forest. The hunter or wayfarer in the jungle puts his rice into a large joint of bamboo, which he stands at the edge of a little fire until the contents are sufficiently boiled. The hard silicious sheathing of the bamboo easily withstands the heat of a single cooking. Once used, the joint is thrown away, for there are plenty more to be cut as occasion demands. Sometimes cooked rice

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252 for a journey is carried in the same joint in which it was boiled.
415 Certain kinds of bamboo, such as the thorny variety "wa hsgu,"
262 which grows in low lands, impart a special flavor to the rice that is cooked in them. Rice deriving its taste from the thorny bamboo is thought to be one of the most delicious viands that can be obtained and is called "me taw." When certain kinds of bamboo bear fruit,

POUNDING PADDY IN A MORTAR

which is at long intervals, their seeds are often cooked and eaten in place of rice.

The larger vegetables, like pumpkins, yams, etc., are cut up and boiled until soft. Green fruits and shoots are also cooked, although many spicy kinds of shoots and ripe fruits are generally eaten raw.

262 There are intervals when a village community lives only on
252 rice eaten with a little salt, fish-paste gravy, and red peppers. After

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a fishing or hunting expedition, however, or when some feast is held, the people gorge themselves with as many kinds of meat or fish as they can obtain. Larger fish and the flesh of animals are cut up and cleaned before cooking. No part of an animal is wasted. The intestines, when properly cleansed and prepared, are considered especially toothsome. The best-liked meats are pork and venison. Birds, pigeons, and ducks are also regarded as good eating. Small birds are often cooked without other preliminaries than a hasty

THE FIREPLACE IN A HILL KAREN HOUSE
The housewife is watching the pot boil. Signs of approaching civilization are apparent, such as the enamel plate and the kerosene oil tin.

plucking of the feathers. Meats are ordinarily cooked with the oil pressed from sesame seeds and flavored with condiments more or less in the manner of Indian curries. For this purpose a larger or smaller quantity of the following spices are used: tumeric, ginger, cloves, cardamon seeds, and cinnamon bark, besides tamarind, lime-juice, and the inevitable salt and chili. Fishermen and hunters like to roast small game, fish, or strips of meat from larger animals between splints of bamboo hung near or over a camp fire. The Polynesian way of baking such foods is often employed, the fish, flesh, or fowl being wrapped in plantain leaves and buried in a pit, which is lined with stones made hot by having had a roaring fire

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on them. Meat in excess of immediate needs is cut into narrow strips and dried on a rack over a fire. The strips are then covered with salt and stored away for future use. Fish are dried in the same way. Such preserved foods are eaten by the workers in the fields or help to furnish forth the repasts on a journey. In the hills, so far as I have observed, the Karen does not fry his food; but on the plains, where he has more or less taken up Burmese ways, cooking food in fat has become somewhat common. This is usually done outside the house, however, because the Karen, like the Burmese and Shan, have a superstitious fear of the smell of cooking.

While cooking is preeminently the women's work, it seems that nearly every man can cook and does on occasion prepare his own food. I have eaten many a tasty meal prepared by Karen men, who considerately took pains to have clean utensils and to use only such condiments as they knew white men were likely to relish.

The serving of food among the Karen is a simple matter. The rice is emptied into a tray, the meats or vegetables are put in little bowls, and all are set on a mat on the floor. The members of the household squat around this "family board" and eat with the hand. They pour gravy from the meat, fish, or other side-dishes on the rice, work it in with the fingers, and convey the food in compact lumps to their mouths. Among the more primitive large plantain leaves often serve as trays and plates. The Karen on the plains use separate dishes of china or enamel-ware, which are readily obtained in the bazaar. These are set on a low table, standing no more than six inches above the floor. This manner of serving is in vogue among the Burmese. There is not much sociability about a Karen meal. Each person attends to his eating until he has finished, when he rises, rinses off his hands, quenches his thirst with a drink of water, and withdraws to sit down, or leaves the house without formality. The members of a family generally eat together; but if guests are present, the women usually wait until the men are served. Large quantities of food are prepared for wedding and funeral-feasts, which, as a rule, the men and women partake of separately without particular order or arrangement.

The safety-match is nowadays the common means employed by Karens in producing fire; but formerly the flint and steel were used, as they were all over the world in the early days of the nineteenth century and before. A simpler, and probably indigenous, method was by the friction of two dry pieces of bamboo. One

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usage, but they are somewhat puzzled by new situations and in such cases are apt to give themselves the benefit of the doubt. Stealing, such as appropriating paddy from a bin or leading off another's ox or taking somebody's money, is severely dealt with among the Karen. But carrying away a small trinket that takes the eye, either with or without the owner's permission, is not considered important enough to be noticed.

THE WOMEN

Among races less advanced than the Karen the attention of the men is almost entirely taken up with warfare and hunting, while the work about the house and village is left to the women. The Karen have not progressed far enough beyond primitive conditions for the men to assume all the burdens of the home life that properly fall to the stronger sex. The men still feel their superiority and remain idle, while the women do work too heavy for them. Even apart from the care of the children, the women bear the heavy end of the burden. They are, to be sure, accepted as necessary and useful members of the family, but, none the less, the men consider themselves dishonored if brought into close contact with a woman's garment or compelled to appear in any way subordinate to a female. They will not, or would not in the olden days, go under a house, lest they should have to pass under a woman. In this respect they entertain feelings similar to those of Burmese men.

As housekeeper the Karen woman's work is by no means confined within the irregular partitions of her living-room or house. She draws the water, which means in the hills that she must descend to the stream and carry up the family supply in bamboo joints hung by strings across her head. She has been trained to do this from the time she was so small that she could only struggle up the hillside with one undersized bamboo at her side. Usually she has her little girls' help in this daily task. (See p. 140.) She must pound and winnow the paddy, polish it in a mortar, wash it, and prepare the meals. Either she brings in fagots of wood and splits it, or the young women fetch bundles of dry bamboo upon their heads and stack them near the ladder of the house. (See p. 132.) She is as skilled in the use of the "dah" (long knife) as her husband. When the meal is cooked she sets it out, if she follows the old custom, on a wide wooden tray or, if she has adopted new ways,

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782 the family, and its contents are sprinkled on the grain. This rite is supposed to cleanse the families from evil and to produce good [793] crops. The four priests officiate under special names, of which three signify, respectively, lord of the village, messenger, and

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KAREN GIRLS POUNDING PADDY IN A MORTAR OUT-OF-DOORS

keeper of the village. I do not know the meaning of the fourth title. During the ceremony they wear embroidered tunics, longer than ordinary garments. From the people they receive gifts of beads and ear ornaments. In some villages a bullock is substituted for the hog, and in one of the Mopgha villages near Toungoo the inhabitants require a coal-black bullock, being willing to pay a large price in order to obtain one.